

**ARLINGTON PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINTUES**

**Approved**

*September 27, 2022*

The Town of Arlington Park and Recreation Commission came to order for its online virtual meeting via Zoom on Tuesday September 27, 2022 at 6:00pm.

***Commission Members:*** Phil Lasker, Leslie Mayer, Jen Rothenberg, Scott Walker, Sarah Carrier and Josh Fenollosa. Shirley Canniff was not in attendance. Recreation Director Joe Connelly was also present.

***Anticipated Speakers:*** Kate Tooke, Copley Wolff, KZLA, Carlene Scaravaglione, Ryan Whitney, Alan Jones, Michele Meagher, Kelley Damore

***Preliminary Matter:*** Phil Lasker, Park & Recreation Commission Chair, took formal attendance via a roll call and read a statement pertaining to Governor Baker's Public Meeting Law change due to COVID-19 regarding virtual meetings. Meeting business ground rules and procedures were also covered by Mr. Lasker.

**Robbins Farm Landscape Architect Interviews:**

**Open Forum:**

- Ms. Melofchick – Russell St. Requested more information on the design presentations – “What percentage of the design is universal design?” Mr. Lasker stated that the interview process has not been completed and project details are not finalized. Ms. Melofchick encouraged the Commission to “create the first park for children and adults implementing universal design”. She also requested more information on the concrete pad poured behind the back stop at Buzzell Field. Mr. Connelly stated that the concrete pad was poured for the purpose of installing a bike rack.
- Ms. Mayer: Noted that the Commission’s efforts to create accessible parks and playgrounds are not new and that the designs have evolved over time. The Commission participated in a study with the Institute of Human Centered Designs. Results can be found on the Recreation website.

**Carlene Scaravaglione, OT/Entry Level Doctor of OT Student – Summer Review:**

Ms. Scaravaglione, a Tufts University Occupational Therapy Doctoral candidate presented the findings from her project at Club Rec this past summer, “Maximizing Inclusive Recreation Implementation and Evaluation”.

2021 – Conducted an evaluation of Club Rec staff, staff orientation and summer programming.

2022 – A new inclusion director was hired to work at Club Rec and inclusion training was provided at staff orientation and throughout the summer.

Ms. Scaravaglione supported the director, implemented staff training, gathered data from a “pre-post-post survey”, conducted interviews with children at Club Rec and provided additional support to participants and staff.

**Findings:**

Throughout the summer most staff (ranging from 60-69%) reported feeling an increased comfort level in the following categories.

- Encouraging hesitant participants.
- Modifying activities to support the needs of all participants.

- Starting activities during downtime.
- Talking with parents and guardians to gain more information about participants' interests and needs.

During morning staff meetings, Ms. Scaravaglione encouraged staff to brainstorm ideas to create a more inclusive environment. She also implemented "Topics of the Week" discussions to educate staff on additional topics related to children.

All data including surveys, interviews and training modules will be shared with Mr. Connelly. Mr. Connelly will forward to the Commission for review.

Ryan Whitney, a former Club Rec participant, staff member and now of Tufts University, stated that the program is now collaborating with the Recreation's Kids Care Afterschool Program.

**Request from Friends of Crusher Lot:**

Mr. Jones requested that the Commission consider supporting a CPA request for a feasibility study of the Crusher Lot to assess the needs for restoration, rejuvenation and rehabilitation of the small, undeveloped, forested area.

The areas of concern; poorly defined trails, erosion, trash and dumping, invasive species and the premature death of trees resulting from the prior. Ideas for improvement include; woodland classrooms, exercise groups, accessible/universal design, climate change mitigation. Mr. Jones provided a copy of a heat map created by MRWA showing Crusher Lot and Menotomy Rocks Park as the coolest locations in town. This is largely due to the density of trees in each location.

In summary, the group believes that the request meets CPA criteria as it is for a feasibility study of an open space/recreation property and the purpose of the study is for rehabilitation and restoration.

- Ms. Mayer: CPA has already approved a FY22 CPA request submitted by Emily Sullivan in the amount of \$30K for a public land management plan. The study, which is being conducted in collaboration with KZLA and David Morgan, is underway. The hope is that Crusher Lot is also captured in the study. Findings will assist in maintenance requests and recommendations which are not covered by CPA.
- Ms. Garnett: Recommended that Mr. Jones get involved in the study to present concerns which may require additional funding.
- Mr. Connelly: The Commission has a multi-year CPA/Capital plan. While requests are important, it also needs to be determined how the request fits into the current plan. He also recommended further discussion to access other funding to take pressure off CPA.
- Ms. Rothenberg: Thanked Mr. Jones for all his efforts and extended support of the project as it develops.
- Mr. Lasker: Noted that the Friends of Crusher Lot have brought much needed attention to the location. Stated that accessibility is also important to the students accessing the Ottoson Middle School.
- Mr. Fenollosa: Supports the efforts of the Friends group siting the need to address grading and broken paths.

Following the discussion, Mr. Jones withdrew the request. He stated that he would very much like to be involved and will follow up with Mr. Connelly.

**Request for Off-Leash Hours at Parallel Park:**

Ms. Meagher was unable to attend this evening. Ms. Ann Shildneck spoke in her place.

Ms. Shildneck shared that there was a small group of neighborhood dog owners that met frequently in the mornings at Parallel Park around 7:00am. The owners admitted that they allowed their dogs off leash during these visits as long as there were no other users in the park. The group has stopped taking the dogs off leash after they were reported to Arlington Police.

Ms. Schildneck reported that the group doesn't have a dog park close by and that they help the community by cleaning up the park, cleaning up after other dog owners and believes themselves to be "good stewards of the park".

- Mr. Connelly: The Commission conducted public meetings regarding off leash dog hours for two years before approving off leash dog hours at specific park locations. Parallel Park was not selected due to its proximity to busy streets and concerns of dogs getting out through the lower gate accessing Mystic Valley Parkway.
- Ms. Mayer: Stated that regulations prohibit off leash dogs on courts (basketball, tennis, pickle ball) and in playgrounds. The grassy area at Parallel Park is limited and located on a slope between the playground and basketball court. She also noted that the town leases the property from the state.
- Mr. Lasker: Pointed out that Robbins Farm and Menotomy Rocks Park both have playgrounds and courts on the property but have scheduled off leash dog hours. Ms. Mayer noted the distance between the elements at Robbins and Menotomy is greater than at Parallel Park. It was also mentioned that there has been a significant increase in discussions with APO regarding off leash dog problems and concerns.
- Ms. Rothenberg: Suggested a trial period with limited hours, possibly 7-8:30am. Mr. Connelly shared that to remain consistent with other locations, off leash hours are 6-9am.
- Monique Noelle: Spoke as a Parallel Park abutter stating that she typically frequents the park with her dog between the hours of 7-8:15am and there are very rarely other people at the park. She believes that the size of the grassy area is sufficient because the groups that typically meet at the park are small.
- Mr. Walker: Pointed out potential difficulties in keeping the dogs in the grassy area because it is located between the playground and courts. He also stated that he would support a trial period.
- Ms. Garnett: Worked for DCR in the past. Advised the Commission to contact DCR to avoid potential legal issues. DCR has different off leash dog regulations.
- Mike Bolt: Also spoke as a Parallel Park abutter who feels that the dog owners that frequent the park are very responsible. He also noted that the grassy area is big enough to throw a ball around with the dog without it going into the playground or courts. From his experience, dogs do not go on the courts unless they are being trained as service dogs.

Mr. Connelly said that the off leash by-law was met with significant resistance. It would not have passed Town Meeting without compromise, adding the rules prohibiting off leash dogs from courts and playgrounds. Moving forward with the request would require the Commission to notify abutters of the proposal and schedule a public input session.

Mr. Connelly will contact Town Counsel & DCR this week for more information before taking any further action.

**Special Event Request – Spooky Walk:**

Ms. Damore presented the special event request to hold the Annual Spooky Walk at Menotomy Rocks Park on Saturday, October 29, 2022 between the hours of 6:30-8pm with a rain date of Sunday, October 30. This will be the first Spooky Walk "post-Covid" and will introduce a new generation of participants to carry on the tradition. Ms. Damore stated that the event organizers are aware of the requirements to hold the event; police detail, single-side of the street parking, no open flame or fire, carry-in/carry-out trash removal and clean up. Mr. Connelly noted that he has the official application at the Recreation office.

The Commission extended their gratitude to the group for hosting the beloved event for so long and appreciation for recognizing the concerning issues from past years.

- Mr. Lasker and Ms. Rothenberg: Questioned how and to what extent the event would be publicized. Ms. Damore stated that she does limit her posting to one Facebook group and shares event details with the

Brackett and Bishop PTOs. She did note that information about the event is spread largely by other Facebook group users who are aware of the event.

Ms. Mayer made a motion to approve the Annual Spooky Walk, with discussed restrictions and safety plans in place, seconded by Ms. Rothenberg.

Roll call vote:

Ms. Rothenberg – YES

Ms. Mayer – YES

Mr. Walker – YES

Mr. Lasker – YES

Approved 4-0.

**Approval of Minutes:** Ms. Rothenberg made a motion to approve the minutes of September 13, 2022, seconded by Ms. Mayer.

Roll call vote:

Ms. Rothenberg – YES

Ms. Mayer – YES

Mr. Walker – YES

Mr. Lasker – YES

Approved 4-0.

**Comments and Items for Future Meetings:**

Courts assessment discussion.

Open Space plan. Mr. Connelly will add as a future agenda item.

**Correspondence Received:** Mr. Connelly responded directly to correspondence regarding Spy Pond Playground.

**New Business:** Menotomy Rocks Park benches will be discussed on October 25. Mr. Connelly will participate in a site walk with Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park to discuss the removal of the green benches, the historical value and integrity of the benches and ADA compliance requirements. Ms. Carrier volunteered to accompany Mr. Connelly on the site walk. Ms. Mayer requested an update on the discussion to add a community garden at McLellan Field. Mr. Connelly has a meeting with the working group in 2 weeks. Ms. Garnett suggested incorporating subtle historical elements in new park and playground designs like those presented this evening. Mr. Fenollosa requested more information on the next steps in choosing a designer. Mr. Connelly will email the Commissioners tomorrow.

Mr. Walker motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:04pm, seconded by Ms. Mayer.

Roll call vote:

Ms. Rothenberg – YES

Ms. Mayer – YES

Mr. Walker – YES

Mr. Lasker – YES

Approved 4-0.

The Arlington Park & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes were respectfully submitted by Deanna Stacchi.